

VZCZCXRO0890
OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHNE #1985/01 2001303
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 181303Z JUL 08
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2690
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNNSG/NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS GROUP COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 1570
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 6666

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 001985

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/23/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [TSPL](#) [KNNP](#) [ETTC](#) [ENRG](#) [TRGY](#) [IN](#)
SUBJECT: JULY 22 CONFIDENCE VOTE RESULT FAR FROM ASSURED

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Steven White for Reasons 1.4 (B and D)

11. (C) SUMMARY. As of July 18, the last business day before the special session of parliament begins on July 21 and culminates in the confidence vote on July 22, the Congress Party-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government's victory is far from assured, with the future of the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative hanging in the balance. Officially declared positions on the confidence motion are 259 votes in favor of the UPA government and the nuclear initiative, 255 against, and 2 confirmed abstentions, with 27 undecided. Shiv Sena's 12 votes constitute the largest block of the undecided votes; some party members may abstain. The other 15 undecided votes consists of a motley assortment of independents and small parties with diverse agendas and shifting loyalties. Post believes 10 are leaning toward supporting the UPA, 2 are leaning against, and three remain indeterminate. The jailed members of parliament are likely to vote. The UPA government will need the support of the majority of the undecided members -- and as many abstentions from Shiv Sena or others as possible -- to prevail in the confidence vote. Negotiations will go down to the wire and the result may be close. END SUMMARY.

Government Leads By a Nose, But Too Close To Call
- - -

12. (C) The numbers have tightened considerably as of Friday, July 18, the last business day before the special session of parliament begins on Monday, July 21 and culminates in the confidence vote on Tuesday, July 22. Based on conservative estimates, official declared positions on the confidence motion are 259 votes in favor of the UPA government and the nuclear initiative, 255 against, and 2 confirmed abstentions, with 27 undecided. (The government needs a majority of the 543 Lok Sabha members present and voting, which would require at most 272 votes for a majority, but likely less depending on abstentions and absences.) Shiv Sena's 12 votes constitute the largest block of the undecided votes. The party is allied with the BJP, but supports the nuclear initiative; some of its members may abstain. The other 15 undecided votes consists of a motley assortment of independents and small parties with diverse agendas and unclear loyalties. The UPA government will need the support of the majority of the undecided members -- and as many abstentions from Shiv Sena or others as possible -- to prevail in the confidence vote.

Trend Does Not Favor Government
- - -

13. (SBU) These conservative estimates reflect a general trend against decisive support for the government in recent days

that leaves it short of previous best-guess estimates. Gradually, the pool of likely UPA government supporters has diminished as four likely supporters switched to the opposition and 10 remain unwilling to commit. The UPA lost four votes to the opposition: one Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) member defected from the UPA Coalition and three Independents chose to support the opposition. The UPA government has so far been unable to lock in another 10 votes, including five from Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) -- a dubious UPA Coalition Member -- two from Janata Dal-Secular (JD-S), and three Independents. Despite these conservative estimates, Post still anticipates that several of these undecided members will side with the UPA government in the end.

14. (SBU) The opposition has gained some ground at the expense of the government. In addition to the three Independents who shifted support from the government to the opposition described above, three Samajwadi Party members have indicated their intention to break ranks with their party and oppose the government. However, one Independent and a defector from Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) formerly thought to oppose the government indicated that they are undecided.

Who Are Undecided and Why?

- - -

15. (C) Attention now focuses on the undecided individuals and small parties that collectively commands 27 Lok Sabha votes. Post believes 10 are leaning toward supporting the UPA, 2 are leaning against, and three remain unknown, while some of Shiv

NEW DELHI 00001985 002 OF 003

Sena's 12 members may abstain. Several parties are in negotiations with the government or opposition for spoils, while others continue to debate the most advantageous position to take, in many cases based on very individual or local calculations. The parliamentarians their positions are as follows:

-- The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), is a UPA member and its five MPs are likely to vote as a block. Party leader Shibu Soren had been a UPA Minister and is currently in negotiations with UPA leaders for a ministerial post (as well as possibly bribes). Post believes a compromise will be reached in favor of the UPA.

-- Two of the three Janata Dal-Secular (JD-S) MPs remain uncommitted, while the third has said he will vote against the government. Party leader Deve Gowda continues to negotiate terms with the government and will meet Prime Minister Singh on July 19.

-- Embassy contacts report that the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference's (J&KNC) two MPs will either vote for the UPA or abstain, but are unlikely to vote against the government. Party officials told Embassy staff their hopes of forming a government following state elections in October depend upon a coalition with the Congress Party.

-- The single MP representing the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), Mamata Bannerjee, remains uncommitted. She is a BJP supporter and served as a minister in the previous NDA government. However, she loathes the Left and would find voting with them distasteful.

-- Three Independents MPs remain undecided, with two leaning toward supporting the UPA government and one against. The potential supporters include Thupstan Chhewang from Jammu and Kashmir, who is negotiating for Union Territory Status for Ladakh, and Sansuma Bwiswmuthiary from Assam, who is holding out for assurances of development projects for his constituency. Mani Charenmai from Manipur, who supports an increase in the size of the state of Nagaland, is leaning toward not supporting the government.

¶16. (SBU) The UPA government's hopes for abstentions rest primarily with MPs from two BJP allies, Shiv Sena and the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD). Shiv Sena's 12 MPs and SAD's eight MPs are pro-U.S. and favor the nuclear initiative, but both are also officially part of the BJP-led opposition National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Shiv Sena shares the BJP's right wing ideology and a symbiotic relationship in Maharashtra. The SAD governs the Punjab in coalition with the BJP. Nevertheless, neither party has issued a "whip," which means members could abstain without facing expulsion. A Congress Party leader in Madhya Pradesh told Poloff on July 11 that Congress Lok Sabha floor managers believed Shiv Sena would abstain. SAD leader and Punjab Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal reportedly has come under criticism from senior party members for having shown "undue haste in unilaterally announcing" the decision to instruct his MPs to vote against the UPA government. While SAD has publicly stated it will vote against the UPA government, Shiv Sena remains publicly uncommitted.

Jailed MPs Likely to Cast Votes

- - -

¶17. (SBU) Post's assessment includes six MPs who are currently in jail and are likely to participate in the special session.

Three have already petitioned for and been granted by the courts the "temporary bail" necessary to participate in the special Lok Sabha session. These include Afzal Ansari (Samajwadi Party), who is undecided, but contacts report he is leaning against the UPA; Ateeq Ahmad (Samajwadi Party), who will vote for the UPA; and Rajesh Rajan (Rashtriya Janata Dal), who will vote for the UPA. The other three jailed MPs have likewise submitted the necessary paperwork to the courts and are likely to receive permission to attend the session. Jail release is pending for Suraj Bhan (Lok Jan Shakti Party), who will vote for the UPA; Mohammed Shadabuddin (Rashtriya Janata Dal), who will vote for the UPA; and Umakant Yadav (Bahujan Samaj Party), who is undecided, but contacts report he is leaning toward supporting the UPA, partly because his own party boss, Mayawati, arranged for his arrest when she summoned him to her house. Political

NEW DELHI 00001985 003 OF 003

observers believe these MPs are negotiating for curtailments of their prison terms, among other incentives, and predict that those who vote for the winning faction are unlikely to return to prison.

SP Cautions Not To Believe Everything We Read

- - -

¶18. (C) One news report on July 18 claimed that the Samajwadi Party "hit the crisis button" when only 16 of its 39 Lok Sabha members turned up to a party meeting to prepare for the July 22 vote. However, Embassy staff spoke with two MPs who attended the meeting, Reoti Raman Singh and Kirti Bardhan Singh, who both emphatically called the story a "pure concoction" and confirmed that 33 MPs attended the meeting. Those who did not attend were rebels Munawwar Hassan and Jai Prakash, as well as two jailed MPs Ateeq Ahmad and Afzal Ansari. Two other MPs, Beni Prasad Verma and Raj Babbar, are both suspended from the party, but are close to the Congress Party leadership and have announced their intention to vote in favor of the government.

Comment: This Is Going to Be Close!

- - -

¶19. (C) Last minute deal-making has produced a blurring of commitments as the vote nears. Formerly firm supporters have been seized with doubts, fence-sitters have issued noncommittal or inconsistent statements, and formerly unified parties have fought fragmentation. Motivations are as diverse as India's democracy, including individual ambition, greed, party interests, and of course assessments of national interest. This churning is likely to continue over the

weekend and right up until the last votes are cast.

WHITE